

**A STUDY ON THE USE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES  
AFTER STRATEGY TRAINING AMONG FORM FOUR ESL STUDENTS :  
A CASE STUDY.**

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**UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA**

**2008**



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**by**

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**Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree  
of Masters of Arts**

**AUGUST 2008**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and foremost, my utmost gratitude goes to God Almighty for His kindness in blessing me with good health, strength and most importantly endurance to successfully complete my work on time.

My sincere appreciation also goes to my supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Sarjit Kaur, for her assistance, patience and guidance in the writing of this thesis. Her concern and constructive advice has enabled me to proceed with this thesis despite the difficulties encountered when writing it.

I am deeply grateful to the Principal of SMK Hamid Khan for granting me permission to carry out this study in school. I am also grateful to my 42 students who were willing to participate in this study. My special thanks also goes to the ten students who participated in the pilot study. All these students have given me useful insights in language learning.

I would also like to thank my friends and colleagues who were willing to share and provide me with the necessary information that I needed for my study.

Finally, my deepest appreciation goes to my loving and inspiring family who has supported me all the way through. My mother has endlessly showered me with her undying love and sacrifice whilst my husband has always been there for me to share my ups and downs in completing this thesis. My sisters have also encouraged me to complete this thesis by sharing ideas. To my children, Matthew and Jessica, thank you for bearing and helping me go through this study all these years.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CALL	Computer Assisted Language Learning
CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English As A Second Language
et. al	And others
KBSR	<i>Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah</i> (Integrated Curriculum for Primary Schools-ICPS)
KBSM	<i>Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah</i> (Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools-ICSS)
L 1	First Language
L 2	Second Language
LHTL	Learning How To Learn
LLS	Language Learning Strategy
MOE	Ministry of Education
NILAM	<i>Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca</i> (Reading Habit as a Source of Knowledge)
PMR	<i>Penilaian Menengah Rendah</i> (Lower Secondary Assessment)
SAC	Self-Access Centre
SAL	Self- Access Learning
SILL	Strategy Inventory for Language Learning
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SPM	<i>Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia</i> (Malaysian Certificate of Education)
UPSR	<i>Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah</i> (Primary School Evaluation Test)

**KAJIAN MENGENAI PENGGUNAAN STRATEGI PEMBELAJARAN  
BAHASA SELEPAS LATIHAN STRATEGI DI KALANGAN PELAJAR  
TINGKATAN EMPAT DALAM KELAS BAHASA INGGERIS SEBAGAI  
BAHASA KEDUA : SATU KAJIAN KES.**

**ABSTRAK**

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meninjau perkembangan autonomi pelajar melalui latihan strategi dalam penggunaan bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua. Strategi penggunaan bahasa dimaksudkan sebagai langkah kesedaran atau ketidaksedaran mental yang digunakan oleh seseorang pelajar dalam penguasaan bahasa sasaran yang dipelajari sementara latihan strategi merujuk kepada pengenalan yang jelas dan terperinci terhadap strategi-strategi pembelajaran bahasa semasa belajar dimana pelajar-pelajar diberikan penjelasan mengenai bila, bagaimana dan kenapa strategi-strategi itu boleh digunakan untuk memudahkan proses pembelajaran. Seramai 42 orang pelajar berbilang kaum dari sebuah kelas Tingkatan Empat aliran sastera dan dua orang guru siswazah dalam matapelajaran Bahasa Inggeris di sebuah sekolah menengah dalam bandar di Pulau Pinang terlibat dalam kajian ini. Kesemua pelajar tersebut berada pada tahap sederhana dari segi pemahaman dan pertuturan bahasa Inggeris.

Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengenalpasti strategi pembelajaran yang digunakan oleh pelajar-pelajar yang terlibat dalam kelas bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua selepas latihan strategi.

Selain itu, kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengkaji persepsi pelajar-pelajar dalam menggunakan strategi-strategi ini dalam proses pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris selepas latihan strategi.

Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pelajar-pelajar dalam kajian ini menggunakan pelbagai strategi pembelajaran seperti metakognitif, kognitif, afektif, sosial dan kompensasi dalam proses pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa pelajar-pelajar tidak sedar tentang strategi pembelajaran bahasa yang digunakan serta manfaat yang dapat diperoleh dengan menggunakan strategi-strategi ini dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris. Di samping itu, ada segelintir pelajar yang berpendapat bahawa penggunaan strategi pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris ini tidak menguntungkan mereka dalam sebarang aspek kerana mereka jarang menggunakan bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua dalam kehidupan mereka. Kajian ini turut melaporkan bahawa pelajar-pelajar meghadapi masalah-masalah seperti "kurang keyakinan", "kerisauan" dan "perasaan malu" dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggeris. Kajian ini juga memaklumkan bahawa pelajar-pelajar enggan menggunakan konsep pembelajaran sendiri kerana kekurangan motivasi dan pengukuhan. Pada keseluruhannya, keputusan-keputusan yang diperoleh menunjukkan bahawa adanya keperluan untuk menjalankan latihan strategi untuk mengalakkan pelajar-pelajar menggunakan strategi pembelajaran bahasa dan mendedahkan pelajar-pelajar kepada pelbagai jenis strategi pembelajaran bahasa yang dapat memberikan manfaat kepada para pelajar untuk mengetahui kekuatan dan kelemahan mereka dalam proses pembelajaran bahasa. Tambahan pula, kajian ini mencadangkan agar latihan strategi

diberikan kepada pelajar-pelajar untuk mereka memperbaiki bahasa Inggeris mereka. Maklumbalas diberikan melalui penulisan jurnal dan proses pembelajaran berlaku apabila pelajar-pelajar dapat menggunakan strategi yang mereka biasa gunakan untuk menuju kearah pembelajaran sendiri.

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**ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the use of language learning strategies after strategy training in an ESL classroom. Language Learning Strategies (LLS) refer to the conscious or unconscious mental steps that are employed by learners' to aid in the acquisition of a target language whereas strategy training refers to the explicit introduction of language learning strategies during lessons where learners are exposed to when, how and why these strategies can be used to facilitate the learning process. This study involved 42 Form Four students from different races in an urban Government Secondary School in Penang. The ESL students were of an intermediate level of proficiency and knowledge.

The primary objective of the present study is to identify the types of language learning strategies employed by the students in an ESL classroom after undergoing strategy training. Besides that, it also aims to analyze students perceptions on the use of the strategies in their language learning after strategy training.

The findings revealed that students employed various language learning strategies (LLS) such as metacognitive, cognitive, affective, social and compensation strategies in their process of language learning. This study also points out that students were unaware of the language

learning strategies used and they were not aware of the benefits of using these strategies in learning English. Furthermore, a few students felt that learning these strategies would not benefit them in any way as they rarely used English in their daily lives. Apart from that, it was also revealed that students were having problems such as “lack of confidence”, “anxiety” and “shyness” in learning English. This study also reports that students’ refuse to become independent learners because they lack motivation and reinforcement. Overall, the findings have highlighted that there is a need to conduct strategy training to promote students to use LLS and to expose students to the various types of LLS which can be beneficially applied to enable more students to identify their strengths and weaknesses in language learning. In addition to that, the study suggests strategy training be carried out to enhance students’ language learning. Students are provided with feedback through their journals and learning takes place when students are able to use their most required strategy to become independent learners.



# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the impact of globalization in the field of education. It also highlights the objectives and limitations of the study. Definitions of terms used in the study are also provided. It is hoped that the study would be able to provide valuable information and recommendations in using language learning strategies after strategy training in the ESL classroom. Apart from that, the researcher hopes that ESL students would be able to share the insights that can be arrived at according to the findings of the study and thus benefit from this study.

Globalization has brought about significant changes to the field of education. What we used to know as gaining education through books has virtually changed to gaining education via information technology. Today with virtual schooling that incorporates various technologies like e-mail, on-line discussion and virtual tutorials, education has become less physically binding and more individuals can gain access to education. (Kaur,2000)

To reduce the gap between what used to be a teacher-centred scenario in a classroom and the formation of an ICT generation, educational organizations need to realize the need to incorporate self-directed learning among young learners so that students would be able to move away from

the stereotypical teacher-oriented teaching and learning method and become autonomous learners.

## **1.1 Background to the Study**

According to Lai (2005), learner autonomy is defined as learners accepting and learning about their own learning habits and sharing in the decisions and initiatives to give shape and direction to the learning process. Learner-centred approaches focus on the learner learning to acquire learner autonomy in the ESL classroom. Researchers like Ellis and Sinclair (1989) and Nunan (1997) realize that working with individual differences can be dealt with effectively if learners are taught to be self-dependent and this can be done through 'learning-how-to-learn' strategies.

Holec (1981) describes an independent learner as one who takes charge of his/her own learning. This is not something that is inherited but has something to do with formal learning. Oxford (1990: 17) emphasizes six basic strategies in language learning which "are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations". These strategies include Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, Meta-cognitive, Affective and Social Strategies.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) define learning strategies as special ways in information processing that enhance comprehension, learning or retention of

information. They also summarized that learning strategies can be divided into Meta-cognitive, Cognitive and Social / Affective Strategies.

According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 4), meta-cognitive strategies are defined as strategies of learning that involve "thinking about or knowledge of the learning process, planning for learning, monitoring language while it is taking place or self evaluation of learning after the task has been completed". Cognitive strategies, on the other hand, are strategies that reflect "mental manipulation of tasks" whereas social/affective strategies involve "mental control over personal effects that interferes with learning".

Pemberton et al. (1996) view autonomy as an ideal state where learners assume full responsibility for their learning; it seeks to change the system not just in the classroom but also in the social structures that control the classroom. As such, in order to promote learner autonomy in a classroom, it should be conducive and suitable first so that it becomes more effective.

Brown (1998) makes the observation that some textbooks themselves include exercises in style awareness and strategy development and suggests that teachers should give students an opportunity to determine the strategies they would be most comfortable with in promoting learner autonomy. Brown further states that "if teachers everywhere would do no more than simply follow the above suggestions, significant steps could be made toward encouraging students to make a strategic investment in their own language learning success" (1998:22).

If a student lacks motivation and the right attitude in learning a language, then the student would look at things differently and the importance of learning a language like English would be dealt with in an uninteresting manner. The teacher as researcher has to play an important role so that the student gets the benefits from his or her experience and knowledge to sustain an educational reform. As the teachers get to know their students better, they would be able to respond directly to their students' needs and strengths and at the same time increase the effectiveness and relevance of their own teaching.

It is therefore essential for the teacher to take on the role of facilitator in order to initiate the move to allow learners to manage their own self-directed learning. The emphasis that has to be given to learners is 'how to learn' instead of 'what to learn' (Ellis and Sinclair, 1989).

However, in carrying out this task, the teacher has to know that the use of language learning strategies vary from one individual to another. Nunan (1995) posits the view that there is a gradual transfer of decision-making power and it requires a sensitive dosage of both teacher and student input. When learners can themselves become teachers and researchers, then we can conclude that the strategies adopted by the students have been very successful.

Brown (2000:15) observes that in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, a foreign language which then included the English Language was taught using the Classical Method that focused on “grammatical rules, memorization of vocabulary and of various declensions and conjugations, translation of texts, and written exercises”. Highlighting the fact that little research has been done on second language acquisition at that time, a foreign language was taught in the same manner as other language skills.

However, Brown further explained that it was not until the 1970s that teachers and researchers realized that learners varied in their language learning as some were “endowed with the abilities to succeed whilst others lacked those abilities” (p. 123). This observation led Rubin & Stern (1975, cited in Brown, 2000) to conclude that good language learners would take charge of their learning if they are taught or exposed to some strategy training.

In view of the importance of English in the age of Information and Communication Technology (ICT hereafter) , the Malaysian government has made changes in its educational policies by implementing the use of English as the medium of communication in major subjects like Mathematics and Science in schools. This means that educational organizations today have to recognize the importance of empowering people at all levels and move away from patriarchy, control and dependency (Kaur, 2000).

In Hong Kong, Pierson (1996) suggests that every language learner has a different way of acquiring a language and different strategies are used by different individuals. As such, it is the trainers who can play an important part in helping students to acquire a language through strategy training. He also indicates that independent learning is important to the Chinese culture and if training is given, then it would benefit most language learners.

As knowledge gained yesterday is no longer sufficient to equip a person for a lifetime, it is the teachers in schools who are responsible to ensure that both individuals and learning institutions adapt to new strategies. This means that schools in particular have to move away from the stereotypical concept of the teaching and learning process. Teachers have to impart knowledge to help students learn-how-to-learn (LHTL, hereafter). LHTL is a self directed learning method. Smith (1990) defines LHTL as a process of acquiring both knowledge and skills in order to learn effectively in whatever learning situation one encounters. He also emphasizes that the teacher and learners become partners in the teaching and learning process. This can be viewed as autonomous learning where students begin to take control of their learning capacities.

After many professionals and political parties voiced out their concern regarding the decline in the English language and the need to improve English language proficiency among students, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia implemented the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English in the year 2003. Chou (2005) states that English is the most popular language

for communication and the implementation of the change of medium of communication in Mathematics and Science necessitates the upgrading of ICT infrastructures in schools, the training of teachers to become more proficient in the English language, the payment of critical allowances to teachers teaching English, Mathematics and Science and various other ways in the promotion of the usage of the English Language in schools (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2002). All these implementations make it viable to promote strategy training among language learners as it would help develop their skills and make them more independent learners.

Doren (2004) evaluated the context of implementing English in Mathematics and Science in Tenom, Sabah and discovered that there was no correlation between the level of preparedness of students and their achievements in Mathematics, Science and the English language itself respectively. However, Pang (2005) in his study on the 'Readiness of the Use of English in the Teaching of Mathematics and Science in Primary Schools in Sabah' states that there is a positive relationship between the students' level of preparedness and parents' education level. This problem is not likely to exist if the language itself was used widely and proficiently among all students.

It is evident that educational organizations today have to recognize the importance of empowering people at all levels and this includes moving away from being dependent learners. Most importantly, the classroom teacher needs to be a facilitator in the learning process and help learners equip themselves with knowledge, skills and competencies that will enable them to

take responsibility for their learning. Wenden (1985, cited in Brown, 2000) acknowledges the importance of utilizing effective learning strategies to promote learner autonomy as she sees it as one of the primary goals of language teaching.

In promoting the concept of using language learning strategies after strategy training, the teacher needs to know the learners' point of view on how learners can make learning more relevant and meaningful. Besides that, the teacher needs to help learners identify their own learning habits which will eventually help them take up responsibility for their own learning. However, before doing that, one should take into consideration individual differences, needs, interests, goals and motivation for learning. Therefore, in teaching learners how to learn, the teacher can help facilitate the learning process by introducing and equipping them with new learning strategies.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Kaur and Che Lah (1999) observe that many major changes have been taking place in the status and position of the English language in Malaysia as it continues to gain ascendancy in the international scene. It is therefore essential for students to learn and train themselves to become independent learners.

During the English Language Teaching Conference (ELT-Con) held from 13 – 15<sup>th</sup> April 2005 in Penang, the topic on 'CALL(Computer Assisted Language Learning) and the Teachers' Role in Promoting Autonomy' was presented



by Yasmin Hanim. Hanim (2005) states that studies done in Malaysian schools have revealed that students are culturally not prepared to work independently in any language learning situation. Students are more comfortable with teachers spoon-feeding them and they follow the teachers' lead directly. However, she stresses that to enable students to be responsible for their own learning would mean requiring a major restructuring of the whole classroom organization and intensive training.

In recent years, many changes have taken place in the education system. Hanim (2005) notes that current trends in information technology, that is through computers, have established a powerful presence in foreign and second language pedagogy. To Hanim, using computers in language teaching and learning can help promote learner autonomy. Thus, she feels that teachers have a role to play in developing students' language learning strategies, especially among Malaysian students who are more used to a stereotypical kind of relationship with their teachers. In other words, there is a need for these students to incorporate certain learning strategies in their second language learning and thus the aim of this study to examine the effectiveness of strategy training in second language learning in the Malaysian context.

Similarly, during the 6<sup>th</sup> Malaysian International Conference of English Language Teaching (MICELT) held from the 8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> May 2006 in Malacca, Abdullah Hasan and Azwir Astaman from Indonesia presented the topic on 'Motivating The Reluctant Language Learner'. Both these speakers mentioned the same point that many students who study English as a

foreign language feel hesitant and are reluctant to communicate in English because they lack exposure in using English in their everyday lives. They also stressed that various factors had contributed to this failure such as the highly centralized curriculum, unsuccessful English teachers, the reluctant language learners themselves and their low motivation for learning English. To Hasan and Astaman (2006), the solution to these problems is for the teachers to understand and apply the concepts of classroom techniques and to be able to make the learners feel motivated and interested in learning English. Therefore, the teacher must organize, provide security, motivate, instruct, give feedback and most importantly students must understand the characteristics of good language learning strategies and at the same time apply these characteristics. Hasan (2006) further stressed that students must have high motivation, positive attitude, self confidence, be prepared to make mistakes and show interest towards English. The researcher feels that these elements are appropriate in the Malaysian context as well in promoting learner autonomy as students need to be always motivated to achieve something positive.

At the same conference, a presentation on 'Motivation and Meta-cognitive Learning Strategies of Undergraduates in Learning English' by Ho and Devadass from Universiti Perguruan Sultan Idris (UPSI) in Tanjung Malim, Perak, revealed that based on the 207 undergraduates surveyed, most of the students were motivated to learn English because they perceived it to be a global language and to be useful for their future career undertakings. Ho and Devadass (2006) stress that students use different meta-cognitive

strategies to learn English such as learning from their mistakes, finding ways to be better English learners and setting long-term goals to improve their proficiency in English. All of these strategies can only be successful if students are independent and disciplined themselves.

Chou (2005) who carried out a case study on 'Using Dialogue Journals to Analyze Language Learning Strategies in a Spoken English Classroom' in Systematic College, Penang among 30 students, stresses that most students choose to remain passive during classroom activities especially speaking activities simply because they are shy, uncomfortable and lack confidence to use English in class. As Chou did not conduct any form of strategy training in her case study, she observes that most Chinese educated students at a private college in Penang experience numerous difficulties in speaking English and yet not much has been done to explore the means of improving the spoken language.

In the article 'English Not Only Learnt Through Textbooks' (The Star, July 16, 2005) Yin expresses her belief that learning English does not solely depend on classroom lessons and textbooks but also on external aspects such as through English Language Week and English Campaigns. The researcher of this study feels that this belief of Yin is true and vital in today's education system. One good example of learning through authentic material is via the nation-wide Newspaper-in-Education (NIE) programme (which is sponsored by Pizza Hut (M) Bhd. and fully supported by The Star (M) Bhd.) where students are exposed to various activities in the newspaper

supplements and these fun-filled activities do encourage students to improve themselves as this is one way to promote learner autonomy in an ESL classroom.

This study was conducted in SMK Hamid Khan to study the use of language learning strategies after strategy in the ESL classroom. In this study, language learning strategies refer to the 'conscious or unconscious mental steps that are employed by learners to aid in the acquisition of a target language', (Oxford,1990). According to Oxford (1990:1), strategy learning refers to "steps taken by students to enhance their own learning" and when learning takes place, a learner eventually improves his/her proficiency and gains greater self confidence. Brown (2000: 15) stresses that 'good' language learners would "find their own way, taking charge of their learning".

### **1.3 The Profile of SMK Hamid Khan**

Established in 1957, SMK Hamid Khan in Penang is an urban co-ed secondary school under the Ministry of Education which provides secondary education to students aged 13 (Form One) to 17 years of age (Form Five). This school offers subjects that are stipulated by the Ministry of Education and students who have completed their education in this school leave with a *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM) – Malaysian Certificate of Education. This multi-racial school accepts students from various backgrounds, especially those who have obtained 3A's and below in their *Ujian Penilaian Sekolah*

*Rendah* (UPSR) – Primary School Evaluation Test which they had taken in their primary schools at the age of 12 years.

This school has an enrolment of 789 students comprising races such as Malays, Indians, Chinese, Punjabi and others. It also has a staff of 46 teachers and 10 non-academic staff like lab assistants, gardeners, clerks and other administration workers. This 50 year old school has facilities such as two language labs, two computer labs, a library, a resource room, seven science labs and a prayer room for Muslim students and teachers. With these facilities, students and teachers find the school provides a comfortable and conducive learning environment.

In 2006, SMK Hamid Khan created history when it became the first school in Malaysia to create a web page for its Crime Prevention Club. That year also saw an increase in the enrolment of Form 1 students especially those who had excelled with 5A's in the UPSR examination. For the first time, students were streamed according to their abilities after the first monthly test. It is hoped that students will excel both in their curricular and co-curricular activities and do SMK Hamid Khan proud with their achievements.

Preliminary interviews with the English Panel Head in SMK Hamid Khan in June 2005 revealed that teachers are over burdened with administrative work and due to time constraints, teachers tend to emphasize techniques in passing exams and students, on the other hand, learn by applying these techniques to pass their national exams. According to the English Panel Head, "If we learn something that we want to learn or find something worth

learning, we are more inclined to formulate our own strategies or pick up new strategies to enhance our learning or make our learning more efficient” (Personal Communication, June 27, 2005). Therefore, he stresses that every effort that we make to promote learner autonomy in the classroom is usually incidental and very seldom intentional.

In another preliminary interview with an English Language teacher in SMK Hamid Khan, it was discovered that students depend solely on teachers for information as there is not much done to promote learner autonomy. (Personal Communication, June 29, 2005). Commenting on the common strategies used or adopted by students, this teacher mentioned that “students do minimal reading, so they usually memorize rather than understand facts”. Therefore, in order to become independent learners, students have to change their attitude because if they do not, no matter what sort of training we give, learning will never take place.

Presently in Malaysia, most schools are equipped with self-access centres, language labs and resource centres. However, as the education system is inclined to be an exam-oriented system, these centres are under-utilised. In SMK Hamid Khan, the students are fortunate enough to have these resources at their disposal, unfortunately, they lack the strategy training that can further enhance and develop their learner autonomy in the ESL classroom. Therefore the researcher realizes that there is a need to investigate the types of strategy training that can be utilized to further promote learner autonomy amongst these students. It is hoped that the findings of this research will enable the researcher to have

further and useful insights on the use of language learning strategies after strategy training among Form Four ESL students.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study are as follows :

- a). To investigate the types of language learning strategies used by ESL learners after undergoing strategy training in the classroom.
- b). To analyze students' perceptions on using language learning strategies after undergoing strategy training in the classroom.
- c). To examine how strategy training can help ESL teachers' in identifying students' language learning strategies in the classroom.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

The following research questions are based on the objectives of the study:

- 1). What are the types of language learning strategies used by ESL learners after undergoing strategy training in the classroom ?
- 2). What are students' perceptions on using language learning strategies after undergoing strategy training in the classroom ?
- 3). To what extent can strategy training help ESL teachers' identify students' language learning strategies in the classroom ?

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The researcher's aim to carry out the present study is to investigate the use of language learning strategies among Form 4 ESL students in SMK Hamid Khan and to indicate how strategy training can help them use these strategies in language learning. The experience of strategy training through planning, organizing, monitoring and evaluating can help incorporate the important skills to provide students with quality education and to prepare them for their future undertakings especially in their employment in various fields. Besides that, ESL teachers would gain insights into students' learning strategies and these insights would enable them to tailor appropriate tasks for their students in the classroom so that students would benefit most in the learner-centred curricula.

Kassim et al (2004) in their research stresses that self-directed learning is more popular among adults and is seen as an effective way to gain knowledge. As such, since the samples of the study were sixteen years old, they were seen as the ideal group of people suitable for their research. Eventually, they would be responsible to plan, learn and evaluate their own tasks.

This present study is an attempt to investigate the use of language learning strategies after strategy training in an ESL classroom. It is hoped that this research might initiate further research in this area as it is important for Malaysian language learners to be exposed to various strategies so that ESL teachers would not need to 'spoonfeed' students. This research would also be able to help students identify strategies in language learning which



would indirectly help them in their life-long learning process and even in their working environment.

The findings in this study could provide useful information for teachers teaching English in the school where the research is being carried out. Both teachers and students would benefit from the strategy training as it would encourage independence and self-directed methods in language acquisition . This study would also enable students to know the effectiveness of strategy training as it would provide some recommendations for further enhancement of language acquisition. Teachers would then be able to understand their students' affective domains and students would become independent second language learners.

As one of the teachers involved in this study is also the researcher, students would benefit from improved pedagogical practices and as they observe their teachers as researchers, they would then learn about learning through programmes such as 'Learning-How-To- Learn' ( Wolf et al., 2005).

This study would also be able to encourage higher education teachers in various institutions of higher learning in and out of Malaysia to further explore how students are able to use various language learning strategies after strategy training in a scenario that is different from that of a classroom.

Besides that, the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) in Malaysia could also benefit from the findings of this study as it would be able to design various materials in promoting language learning strategies at all levels in various schools. Through this study, the materials that are going to be designed would then be appropriate according to the learners' capability.

In an article on 'The Readiness of the Use of English in Mathematics and Science' by Pang (2004), Pang quoted that most students have difficulties in solving Mathematics problems as they are not proficient in the language of instruction in English Language. This study hopes to indicate the effectiveness of strategy training in promoting the use of language learning strategies in the ESL classroom and it is hoped that other learning subjects would benefit positively as well.

Kaur (2000:18) in her doctoral thesis on strategy training in an ESL classroom, mentioned that most TESL (Teaching English As a Second Language) teachers feel that the limited contact hours provided for the teaching and learning is insufficient to meet the increasing demands and challenges facing the Malaysian ESL classroom. She stresses that "these challenges have been the catalysts that spearheaded the need to promote learner autonomy among ESL students". These constraints faced by the TESL teachers could partly be overcome if learners were taught to be self-dependent. Besides that, Kaur (2000) states that more learner autonomy programmes will help learners recognize their preferred learning styles and enable them to carry out independent language learning outside the

specific classroom hours with limited assistance from the teacher. In other words, it is crucial for students to empower themselves with certain strategy training that will lead to further development of language learning strategies and this will eventually give rise to students who are more able to initiate self-learning.

At the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Language Learning Conference (ILLC) held from the 23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2006 in Penang, Irfan Naufal Umar and Mustapha Abidin presented a paper on 'The Effects of Constructivism Approach in a Web Environment on Students' Language Learning Achievement'. According to these presenters, constructivism proponents assert that discovery and problem solving are the most effective ways of learning and as such these approaches should be the focus in our education system. In their study, Umar and Abidin (2006) indicate that students using web-based learning achieved better results than those students who were in the tutorial mode as such learning environment encourages discovery, exploratory and problem solving activities. This again is essential in using language learning strategies through strategy training as the method makes students self-dependent.

### **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

Firstly, this study is based on only one ESL classroom in a secondary co-ed school in an urban setting in Penang. The selected sample size of 42 students might not be able to provide the qualitative data support for any conclusive findings that may be directly representative of the whole

Malaysian student population. Nevertheless, the results obtained from the selected sample in this study can provide some useful insights in encouraging the use of language learning strategies among ESL learners. Due to time and financial constraints, the researcher is only able to conduct this study among these selected samples. However, the researcher has taken into account individual capabilities and thus the samples selected are representative of a normal ESL classroom in a Malaysian context, that is, their proficiency in English ranges from good to fair and these students were able to respond appropriately during the course of the study.

Secondly, the researcher is also the teacher of the selected class and this might affect the reliability and validity of the study as the sample was selected by the researcher. Although every effort was made to remind the students to give their true and honest perceptions in the implementations of the research instruments used, such as in the interviews and journal writings, the validity of the students' views and perceptions cannot be altogether established. However, the researcher ensured that the students were not allowed to discuss with the other samples their own perceptions and ideas before documenting the findings of the study.

Thirdly, in this study, only two teachers participated in analyzing their perceptions on language learning strategies. Although this might seem like a limitation to the study, it is important to note that these two teachers comprise the total number of teachers teaching the Form Four ESL classroom in SMK Hamid Khan.

Finally, journal writing as a written form of communication between teachers and students is used as a means to understand students' feelings and insights on issues discussed. The students journals were not corrected based on grammatical structures and language proficiency. This is because linguistic competence is not the focus of this study.

### **1.8 Definition of Terms**

The terms used in this research may carry a different interpretation in a different context. So, to avoid any confusion, the following are definitions and explanations of some of the terms that are used to explain ESL learning in this study.

1) Learning-How-To-Learn (LHTL):

- possessing and acquiring both knowledge and skills in order to learn effectively in whatever learning situation one encounters (Smith, 1990).

2) Strategy Training :

- lessons where learners are explicitly taught language learning strategies and explanations are given as to when, how and why these strategies can be used (Oxford, 1990).

3) Learner Autonomy :

- one's ability to take responsibility for the management of one's own learning. (Holec, 1981)

4) Learning Strategies :

- conscious or unconscious mental steps that are employed by learners to aid in the acquisition of a target language (Oxford, 1990).

5) Student Journal :

- where a learner can describe, explore and record his/her personal feelings, reactions, questions and doubts to a learning experience after a lesson in strategy training (Farrell, 1998).

6) Learning Contract :

- refers to a detailed learning agreement prepared by the learner or with the help from the teacher or peers. It usually contains details as to what and how something will be learned, when it would be learnt, resources to be used and the criteria for evaluation on what has been learnt (Dickinson, 1987)

7) Planning :

- one's ability to determine and formulate learning objectives (Oxford, 1990).

8) Organizing :

- understanding and using conditions related to optimal learning of the new language (Oxford, 1990).

9) Monitoring :

- one's ability to check, verify and correct oneself while performing or carrying out a language task (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

10)Evaluating :

- one's ability to judge and check the overall execution and performance of a language task once it has been completed (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990)

## **1.9 Overview of Chapter 1**

This chapter provides an introduction to the study that has been carried out by the researcher. It goes on to discuss the background information on the learning strategies of the English Language as a second language in schools. There is a brief explanation on the profile of the school where the research was conducted to provide more information on the statement of the problem. This is followed by the objectives of the study, the research questions which are based on the objectives of the study, the significance of the study and some limitations to the study. Finally, there is a list of definitions of terms used in this study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the review of literature pertaining to the theory and research on the use of language learning strategies after strategy training. There has been a growing consensus that education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would require much more from students besides being a one way teaching and learning method. This means that educators now need to pay attention to both the process and product of learning and this can only be achieved if the burden of being fully in-charge in the classroom is reduced.

#### **2.1 Theoretical Approaches**

Student learning has been the subject of research done by psychologists for the whole of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Biggs,1999). However, it cannot be denied that the theories of learning have influence in the teaching and learning processes in education. Brown (2001: 21) quotes “Everyone at some time has witnessed the remarkable ability of children to communicate” and the explanation of this development has a lot to do with the language learning theories. Brown (2001) further stresses that an individual could choose to adopt any one of the theories in the study of first language acquisition. The theoretical approaches in this study are taken from three different approaches – behaviouristic, cognitive and humanistic.